

PRAYING FOR THE SICK: FAITH AND SURRENDER

“God is just as willing to restore the sick to health now as when the Holy Spirit spoke these words through the psalmist. And Christ is the same compassionate physician now that He was during His earthly ministry... His disciples in this time are to pray for the sick as verily as the disciples of old prayed.... The Lord’s promise, “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:18), is just as trustworthy now as in the days of the apostles.” {MH 123}

The New Testament abounds with stories of miraculous healing. However, the claim is often made that such miracles are rarely - if ever - experienced today. And yet, the science has not changed. The cause behind every miracle performed by the apostles was their firm and grounded trust in Divine Power. That’s why Sister White describes it as a power “just as trustworthy now as in the days of the apostles”. It’s a power restricted by our faith, not by our time period.

In the book of James, we’re given explicit instruction for the healing of the sick. He states:

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” James 5:14-15

Here, we’re promised that “the prayer of faith shall save the sick”. This implies that the faithless prayer - spoken from a heart devoid of daily surrender - will ever be wanting. While James writes in relation to the elders, the humble steward is called to no lesser standard. As the psalmist David declares: “if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Psalm 66:18. The efficacy of our prayers rests largely upon the faith we choose to develop.

Indeed, this is what James means when he writes: “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16. What greater motivation to surrender our hearts fully and wholly to the Lord than that our prayers for our loved ones might avail much! On a broader scale, Sister White affirms: “only as we live in obedience to His word can we claim the fulfillment of His promises.” And accordingly, “if we render to Him only a partial, halfhearted obedience, His promises will not be

fulfilled to us.” {MH 123}

Of course, the Lord wants us to pray for the sick and suffering in accordance with His will. He desires that we take an active interest in the well-being of our brothers and sisters. Yet let us not forget the words of Inspiration, that “to those who desire prayer for their restoration to health, it should be made plain that the violation of God’s law, either natural or spiritual, is sin, and that in order for them to receive His blessing, sin must be confessed and forsaken.” {MH 124}

What a powerful incentive to banish all sin and selfishness from our lives once and for all. That we may claim God’s promises “in full assurance of faith” and receive His blessing for ourselves and our loved ones. Hebrews 10:22. For soon, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Revelation 21:4.